



Fire Opals and Frost Bite by fay-marie1993

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Summary: An ice skating trip goes wrong. Long one shot. Fluffy.

Fire Opals and Frost Bite

It was the middle of winter break and a layer of snow covered the town. The boys discovered a lake not far from El's hiding place. They gathered their ice skates from their many adventures at the ice skating ring, and invited El to go with them. Hopper was cautious at first, but finally gave in to the idea of El having some fun with her friends. It wasn't that common for her to adventure out. He bought her a pink pair of ice skates and was thanked by a tight bear hug.

A few weeks ago, it would be to El's displeasure to have Max come along. However, the two girls had gotten to know each other over the passed few weeks. El finally calculated she wasn't a threat to her and Mike. The morning they planned to go ice skating, Max was kind enough to do El's wild hair. She pinned it back with a purple gem stoned hair clip. It was Max's when she was younger, but she had since grown out of the style. Mike came into El's room to gather the girls for the trip. El was smoothing down her dark purple jacket. She looked at him with her doe eyes. Mike lost count of how many times El had awestruck him.

"Pretty?" El asked. She felt like she asked it too often. However, being a teen with self image issues didn't give her much of a choice.

"Always pretty," Mike replied, smiling. He took in the image of her smiling back at him. The hair clip sparkling in the light. Mike had something up his sleeve for later that day. He had gotten El an early Christmas gift. However, it was a gift he wanted to give her in private without comments from Lucas and Dustin. He found a fire opal ring at one of the thrift shops. The greens and purples were perfect for El. The way the colors changed in the light captivated him as much as the girl standing before him did.

Max cleared her throat jolting Mike back into reality. "Everyone else is ready," he announced awkwardly. El took his hand and let him guide her into the small living room. Will, Lucas, and Dustin were all sporting winter coats and had their ice skates in hand.

"I hope everyone peed before we left," Dustin blurted out as they ventured into the woods. "Especially the guys."

Will looked at him in disgust. And the boys started arguing back and forth about whether or not urine would actually freeze. El slightly didn't understand the argument, but ignored it with Max. Mike tried not to participate but couldn't help himself at some points. He held El's hand tightly out of habit as he went back and forth with his friends.

They finally approached the lake and Mike kindly helped El put her skates on. Out of curiosity she touched the blade and immediately pulled her finger back.

"It's sharp," she disapproved. Mike took a piece of his shirt and clamped it around El's finger to stop the bleeding.

"That's how it's able to glide over the ice," he explained. He waited for her to question the word glide, but she had gotten more familiar with vocabulary thanks to Hopper. Mike studied her face, another habit of his. Her expression was mainly blank but a smile curved her lips. A sign she was content. Her long lashed eyes always blinked in curiosity. Mike shook himself out of his thoughts and helped her up. El stumbled, not used to the strange shoes on her feet. She fell into Mike who caught her and helped her regain balance. It was like helping a baby deer learn how to walk. El laughed a little at her own clumsiness. However she still blushed from embarrassment. Everyone else knew how to skate but her.

Dustin and Will were the first ones to get on the frozen lake.

"How do we know the ice is thick enough?" Max asked her friends.

"It looks about as thick as Dustin's skull," Lucas commented as he watched his two friends skate in circles. Will ended up falling into the pile of snow that lined the lake. Dustin laughed at him and ended up losing balance, landing right next to him.

El could barely make it to the ice without Mike guiding her. Their hands were entwined and El clamped onto him.

"I won't let you fall. If you fall we go down together," Mike tried to comfort her. She was cutting off the circulation in his arm with her grip. Max zipped passed them, almost causing Mike to lose balance.

The red head turned and playfully smirked back at her friends. El had the urge to pull her backwards again like the day she saw her in the gymnasium. However, they had to focus on not falling on the brutal ice beneath their feet.

"I don't think I like this," El confessed as she loosened her grip on Mike. She tried to balance on her own only gripping his fingers. Will came up to the pair, making it look far easier than it was.

"Don't focus on your feet so much," he pointed out. He stopped next to her and grabbed her other hand. "Try it with us. We won't let anything happen." El smiled at Will's kindness. The two had bonded since Will was well enough. They shared an understanding, which made them friends right off the bat. El loved watching him draw. He also helped her discover her hidden talent. It led to a framed hand drawn picture of a white Persian cat being held by a young girl with brown locks and an 11 tattoo. Will helped work out the kinks since she was a beginner, but it was enough to put her through art school in the future.

El gained confidence as time went by. She tried to skate without support and yelled out in excitement. Then, she crashed into the snow banks. Her friends laughed and she was furious. Dustin helped her up and she found amusement in accidentally knocking him into the snow. Lucas was impressed about the perfect impression of Dustin's face that was left over. Mike stared at El, lost in puppy dog love while Max and Will nearly tumbled over in laughter.

"We should have taught her how to stop," Will laughed.

"Shitheads," Dustin grumbled under his breath.

They were starting to get tired and planned on leaving so they could eat and sleep the rest of the day away. Mike was enjoying a slow skate holding El's hand. It was like they were glued together since the Winter Ball. The rest of the group got off the ice and they were alone.

"I hope you had fun," Mike thought out loud. El didn't know how to put it into words, but it was like Mike's eyes darkened at the thought of them separating. The light always left his face and his lips turned downwards. She would catch him like that staring off into space

when he was alone. It was a look that she often caught Hopper wearing when he was looking at pictures or telling her about Sara.

"I did," El admitted. She thought hard about what to say next. "Why do you look like that?" she finally asked.

"Like what?" Mike said, confused. He wasn't aware at the moment if he looked a certain way.

"Like...Hopper?"

"You mean ugly?"

El elbowed him hard in the ribs and Mike's face lit up once more as he laughed. They stopped skating at the edge of the lake and he closed the space in between them.

"No...I seriously don't understand El," Mike spoke softly.

"I don't know how to explain it. Your eyes turn into black holes," El explained the best she could. Mike's heart dropped a little. She wasn't supposed to know how down he truly felt. Given the events of the passed year, nearly everyone in the group was traumatized. For Mike it just got kind of worse. It was like a rain cloud followed him everywhere he went. It only disappeared when he was with the group or around El. It was something he kept to himself, except maybe Will. He had constant nightmares of Will being possessed. The whole experience hardly left pleasant memories.

"I don't know how to explain it either," Mike said. "Sometimes it's for no reason at all. It's strange. And it's not like a switch I can just turn off. My mind just goes to darker places sometimes."

"I don't like my mind either," El mumbled. Her words made Mike shiver. He would rather suffer before she did. Then he remembered her present.

"Hey...El," Mike interrupted her thoughts. "I think I dropped something while we were skating. You can go ahead and take your ice skates off. I'll be right back."

"Okay," El agreed. She joined the rest of the group where they left

their things. Will skated to the far corner of the lake, the group somehow had avoided. He could see little cracks in the ice that he steered clear of. He pretended to bend over to pick something up just in case El was watching. He felt the ring in his pocket and pulled it out. It was more difficult to hold with gloved hands. The ring was smaller than he remembered. He inched closer pretending to search for something and saw a hole in the ice. He got nervous as he slowly stood up. Shallow water was supposed to freeze better. However with his luck, it didn't. Of course, the ring slipped from his grip and landed in the water.

"Shit," he cursed. The lake was deeper than expected. He couldn't see the bottom. He didn't know how he would explain this to El either. "Son of a bitch!" he cursed again. Mike wasn't thinking or maybe it was the thought of El that gave him the motivation to dive in.

The shallow end looked about six feet deep and was filled with plants and weeds. There was a fallen tree nearby that must have been there for years. Its rotten appearance startled Mike, but he had to focus and hurry. Health class said it wouldn't be long till hypothermia set in. Mike saw a silver glint and grabbed the ring. However he felt a hard tug on his coat. He was caught on a tree branch.

El had her shoes on and was waiting for Mike to return. She was counting the minutes and it had already passed approximately six. Something was wrong. She looked at the lake and there was no sign of Mike. She tugged on Will's sleeve, getting his attention.

"Bad," was all she could say. "Mike isn't here. He dropped something earlier and said he would be back."

Will searched the lake and saw no sign of Mike either.

"Mike is missing!" he said loudly to the chattering group.

"Where did he go?" Lucas asked El.

"He said he was retrieving something. It's been 7 minutes. He should be back," El said. Panic was rising inside of her chest. The group looked at each other and rushed around the perimeter of the lake.

Dustin reached the hole first and cursed under his breath. The rest of the group caught up to him and El stared with wide, frantic eyes. She was close to tears. The portal was sealed so there wasn't a possibility Mike disappeared into the Upside Down.

"Do you think Mike fell?" Max asked, looking into the water. She had a tight hold on Lucas' arm. Will stood next to El. Both of their expressions were similar.

"Only one way to find out," Dustin said, taking off his shoes. Before he was even done, El pushed passed her friends nearly toppling Dustin over. The freezing water shocked her at first so she immediately bobbed up to the surface. She took a deep breath and dove back under. She could hear her friend's muffled shouts above her. El moved mainly out of instinct, forcing back bad memories of water. She saw the rotten tree and saw Mike's dark hair. She wanted desperately to call out to him but it was impossible to shout under water. As she got closer she saw he was caught on a branch and her heart stopped when she saw his eyes were closed. El frantically untangled him and dragged him to the surface by his arm. She had trouble bringing him up because his weight dragged her under. Fortunately, Dustin and Lucas grabbed Mike easily and then helped El out the deadly cold water. The cold was brutal on her body, but she ignored it and rushed to Mike.

"Holy shit!" Dustin cursed. "He isn't breathing!" El let out a sob and tried shaking Mike awake. Max hid her face in Lucas' neck and Will just looked like the life left his face.

The boys looked among themselves to figure out who would do what they learned in class about CPR. None of them agreed to put their lips on their friend but turned to El and simultaneously they all had an idea.

Will found his voice and talked El through it. "Lift up his chin with your fingers," he spoke. "Gently pull down his jaw." Will helped her position her hands correctly, showing her how to pinch his nose. "Don't worry about hurting him," he said when she was hesitant. "This needs to be done. Now put your lips on his and blow air into his mouth." El nervously did as instructed and wasn't sure she was doing it right. "Harder. His chest should inflate." She gave it another try and

Mike's chest slightly inflated. "Keep doing that until he breathes." El tried again and again getting more frantic as it wasn't working. Will was in tears now and Dustin just watched wordlessly. El finally had enough and focused as much power and emotion as she could and used her powers to pull the water out of his lungs.

Everyone cried out as Mike sputtered and gasped air. He coughed violently until he finally caught a painful breath of cold winter air. He tried to sit up but his head spun and he felt someone familiar gripping his arms, holding him up. His vision finally focused seeing the shivering, wet girl in front of him. She was clearly upset.

"Mike!" she crushed him into a hug.

"El, I'm okay," he said weakly. She ran her fingers through his hair and he squeezed her back as tightly as he could. The rest of her friends tearfully followed in the embrace.

When they all separated they needed a way to get Mike back so he could warm up. Dustin and Lucas both supported him as they walked as fast as possible. Max, El, and Will followed behind them. Will took off his coat and wrapped it around El.

"You saved him," Will smiled weakly.

"Yea," Max agreed. "He probably wouldn't be here without you. You're amazing." El was taken by surprise with her compliment but she smiled back at the girl. Will and Max put their arms around El, trying to keep her warmer. They didn't need two people frozen to death.

El was relieved to be home and as soon as they opened the door, they put Mike in front of the fire place. He was shivering constantly and his lips turned an unnatural shade of blue.

"El," Will said before she could get to Mike. "It's best if you change into dry clothes. We will take care of Mike."

"Promise?" El asked. Her eyes searched the boy's face.

"Promise," Will answered softly. El walked to her room and grabbed the first set of clothes she could find. Her pajamas were a matching

black set made of wool, making them soft and comfortable in winter. She took the hair clip out of her hair and smoothed it down. Before leaving she grabbed her blanket and went to the living room. The boys had helped Mike into his dry set of clothes that he brought over in case they stayed the night somewhere. Will found a space heater and turned it on.

"We are going back to get a few things. My mom might have some hand warmers or heating pads around," Dustin told El. "And we would feel bad eating all your food so we are bringing back snacks."

"We'll be back as soon as possible," Lucas finished.

"Okay," El replied. Her voice was suddenly small and she hadn't realized how cold and tired she was herself. She gave Will his coat back, squeezing his wrist gently to show appreciation.

"I'll bring my drawing pad," he smiled at her. She smiled back and nodded. They finally left El alone with Mike.

"Hey," Mike whispered, smiling weakly. His body shook violently even though his friends had tried their best. They had given him the blanket that was folded neatly on the couch.

"Cold," El said. She was shivering herself.

"Cold is an understatement," Mike laughed. He paused for her question that didn't come and assumed she understood. The room was silent except for the crackling of the fire and the low hum of the heater. El moved closer to Mike spreading her blanket over both of them. She instinctively pulled him into her lap which was awkward given the height difference. However, Mike settled comfortably with his head under her chin. She clung to him for dear life as his body shook against hers. El's soft pajamas felt amazing against his ice cold skin. She pulled the blankets tightly around them. They sat in comfortable silence while El ran her fingers through his damp hair.

About an hour passed. El finally turned on the TV for background noise, Mike still laying on her chest. He was shivering every once in a while but his body was warming up slowly thanks to El. She could feel his slow breaths on her arm. He was concerned at first that he

was too heavy but she was perfectly fine.

The cabin door opened and the chatter of their friends greeted them. Will approached El with the hand warmers. He opened a few for them and explained they just warm up. Then he joined his friends in the kitchen for snacks. The group concluded Mike and El would be okay.

El placed one on her stomach, one on Mike's chest, and the last one they shared. El pressed it against Mike's fingers, enclosing them with her own. She rested her head on top of Mike's and felt her eyes getting heavy. Her thoughts wondered dangerously to seeing Mike lifeless in the lake. Tears slipped out of her eyes. Her dark thoughts made her grip her friend tighter.

"El, don't be sad," Mike whispered. Hearing his voice made her heart beat slow down. "You saved me." El put her warm hand on the back of his neck. She wished they could stay like that forever.

It took about another hour, but Mike was finally warm and back to normal. He was tired but gathered the energy to be around friends. He mainly did it to show El he was alright. Mike had to double check that she was okay because her attention had been so focused on his well being. He wrapped the blanket around her shoulders as she sat at his feet and she busied herself with a drawing Will had of hers in his sketch pad.

The group made themselves comfortable watching television with a bowl of popcorn. Somehow Dustin found a frozen pizza they could have later. El leaned back against Mike's legs, her favorite place to be when they hung out. He hated her sitting on the floor and would rather take her place, but El insisted she was perfectly comfortable. While the rest of the group was distracted, Mike found it to be the perfect time to give El her present.

She felt a gentle nudge on her shoulder and raised her head up to look at Mike. Her smile was playful and it made Mike's stomach feel weird. There wasn't a reason at all to be nervous.

"Privacy?" he asked her. El nodded and stood up, placing her drawing on the arm of the couch for later. Mike was a little bit wobbly, so she

helped him up. She guided him to the kitchen where they were finally alone. The television and friendly conversation faded into the background. It was just Mike and El.

The doe eyed girl looked at him innocently. She wasn't sure why he had pulled her alone since he had already thanked her a million times for saving his ass. Mike didn't know where to begin.

"Do you remember what I explained to you about Christmas?" Mike asked her. El nodded.

"Presents...and Santa Clause?" She recalled for him. Mike smiled. He dug inside his pocket and finally felt the ring. He brought it out. El had only seen this type of thing when couples were getting married on TV. Usually the rings had diamonds but this one was unique. The gem stone changed colors in the light. Purples and greens reflected off its surface, leaving El speechless.

"Marry?" She asked in confusion. Mike nearly fell over. He could see how she could misinterpret this.

"No, no," he laughed. "We are too young to even think about it. Not that it would be a bad thing." Mike's face grew hot at the thought. "Anyways, I wanted to give you this just in case I didn't get the chance to see you on Christmas because of family...and stuff." He grabbed her hand and slid it onto El's ring finger. He was relieved that it fit perfectly.

"Mike...I haven't gotten you anything," El admitted. She turned her hand, making the gem sparkle in the kitchen light.

"You don't need to," Mike reassured her. "I mean, we went to the Snow Ball together and we went ice skating. And just hung out and had fun together. I'm just glad you are back." He hated it when he rambled on like that, but El's presence made him nervous sometimes. Her black pajamas highlighted her fair skin and her hair wasn't brushed, yet adorable. Paired with her long eyelashes, brown eyes, and perfect lips, she was stunning.

El peeked into the living room and saw their friends were still distracted. She turned to Mike and asked: "Dance with me?" The

corners of Mike's lips raised and he closed the space in between them. The day had been fun and exhausting at the same time. He couldn't find a reason to refuse.

"Do you remember how?" he asked, closing the space in between them. El placed her arms around his neck and he positioned his around her waste. The girl immediately rested her forehead on Mike's, smiling contently. Mike felt all his tension melt away and he forgot about recent events that stood out in all of their minds. He didn't know what he would do without the girl in front of him.

El followed Mike's movements, since the group was watching a Christmas movie and the song was now slow and heartfelt. When El fully relaxed into him and rested her chin on his shoulder, he felt his heart melt. This gentle soul knew how to warm him up inside and out.